

Supporting Those Who Shape: Understanding and Prioritising Educator Wellbeing

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Abstract

Occupational stress among educators remains a critical issue, adversely affecting their physical and mental health, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and retention rates. This study examines educator wellbeing in Malta, capturing the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, including Heads of Schools, Deputy Heads, Teachers, Learning Support Educators (LSEs), Policy Makers, and Education Managers, as well as Administrators. Framed within Positive Psychology, which emphasises resilience, optimism, and happiness, the research explores the challenges impacting educator wellbeing and identifies strategies for fostering professional and personal growth.

A qualitative methodology was employed, utilising three focus groups to collect rich, in-depth data from a group of Heads of Schools and Deputy Heads, a group of teachers and LSEs and a group of policy makers, education managers and education administrators. Participants, selected through purposive sampling, represented different levels of the education system. Thematic analysis of transcribed discussions identified systemic stressors such as excessive administrative burdens, classroom management demands, workload pressures, and policy-related challenges. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to the study, ensuring adherence to established guidelines. Participants were fully informed about the research objectives, assured of confidentiality, and given the option to withdraw at any stage.

The findings shed light on the pervasive impact of occupational stress across roles, with structural changes needed to address workload reduction, enhance their personal and social competences, improve access to professional support, and implement policies that prioritise mental health and emotional resilience. The study highlights the importance of creating positive workplace environments that nurture collaboration, recognition, and purpose among educators. Recommendations for policymakers include introducing systemic reforms such as increasing mental health resources, enhancing the personal and social competences, reducing bureaucratic demands, promoting flexible work arrangements, and embedding resilience-building initiatives within professional development programs.

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